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DE RUEHBD #0105/01 0940259  
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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN  
TO RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4151  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0393  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0529  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0384  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000105

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PACOM FOR ADMIRAL KEATING  
SINGAPORE FOR DAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2018  
TAGS: [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BX](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF ADMIRAL KEATING TO  
BRUNEI

Classified By: Ambassador Emil M. Skodon, reasons 1.4 (a) (b) & (d)

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Context for Your Visit  
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¶1. (C) Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan is pleased to welcome you to Brunei. Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) Commander General Halbi is enthusiastic about your visit, and his staff has supported our request for you to meet with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah (not yet confirmed). Yours is the highest-level visit of a USG official, military or civilian, since your predecessor, Admiral Fallon came to Brunei and met with the Sultan in March of 2006. Other than visits by DUSD Lawless in May 2006 and COMLOGWESTPAC's regular visits, we have not had a visitor at the Assistant Secretary level or above since Admiral Fallon.

¶2. (SBU) Brunei matters for three reasons: hydrocarbons, religion, and location. Its significance for the United States lies in its role as a reliable exporter of gas and oil to growing Asian energy markets, its status as a responsible voice among Muslim nations, and its location in the heart of Southeast Asia astride the strategic sea lanes of the South China Sea. It is in our interest to see this predominately Muslim country enjoy long-term stability that allows it to increase its contributions to East Asian security, including energy security, and to improved U.S. relations with the Islamic world.

¶3. (C) For their part, Bruneians from the Sultan down see the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia as a critical stabilizing factor regionally and an important strategic counterweight to a rising China. We have seen China conduct a steady, high-level charm offensive in Brunei. The Chinese Defense Minister and Foreign Minister have both visited Bandar Seri Begawan and met with the Sultan in the past three months.

¶4. (C) Since the Sultan and President Bush met in Washington in December 2002, we have made solid progress on deepening our bilateral relationship in four major areas: counter-terrorism, expanded trade and investment, greater educational and cultural exchange, and enhanced military-to-military cooperation. The Mil-Mil relationship has been particularly successful, and your visit will give a timely boost as well as adding new energy and strategic vision.

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Where We Are

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15. (C) We have reached a plateau in the bilateral and military to military relationship with Brunei. Following on to successful deployments to the Mindanao Monitoring Mission and the Aceh Tsunami relief effort, Brunei has taken on board the positive lessons learned and begun to develop some capabilities in peacekeeping and humanitarian response. The 2007 Update to the Defense White Paper gives new priority to building a more deployable force. Thanks in part to training run by New Zealand and participation in GPOI exercises including last year's Khan Quest and the upcoming Shanti Doot, Brunei hopes to soon acquire the capability to rapidly deploy a purpose-trained platoon-sized unit to UN PKO's. You may hear that the RBAF wants to validate the level of competency of its new PKO units through additional training with the USG.

16. (C) The Royal Brunei Navy's (RBN) vessels are tired and ready for replacement. Embarrassment over the state of the fleet and the desire not to lose face, we believe, has been a principle cause of RBN Commander Dato COL Johari seeking to limit the size and scope of the annual CARAT exercise the past few years. The Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) procurement fiasco, which has done some serious medium term damage to the RBN's traditionally close relationship with the UK Navy, is finally near resolution, with new ships on order from a German manufacturer and a sale of the oversized and over-equipped OPVs, possibly to Malaysia, under discussion. Once the new ships are in place, we hope that, plus fresh leadership in the RBN, will give the RBN the confidence to make fuller and better use of the annual CARAT exercise.

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17. (C) For the past several years, sorting out the OPV problem has kept the RBAF from moving forward on much-needed equipment procurements. The award to Harris Corp. of a \$25 million tactical radio network is the first concrete sign that the dry spell is over. We don't expect the RBAF to be instantly flush with cash. Indeed, Deputy Defense Minister Pehin Yasmin Umar publicly defended the new MinDef budget at the Legislative Council session in early March by noting that it was slightly smaller than last year. However, we do expect MinDef to move forward on procuring C4I systems for the Joint Operations Center in the newly constructed, but not yet opened (five sided) Ministry of Defense HQ. (Pehin Yasmin has told us that Northrop-Grumman and Raytheon will be among those invited to tender.) The other high priority planned procurements are for UAV's to address major weaknesses in Brunei's maritime domain awareness and land border monitoring capacities and a multi-mission aircraft to provide medium-range lift and maritime surveillance (the C-27 JCA may be a candidate).

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Where We Can Take the Mil-Mil Relationship  
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18. (C) We can maintain the mil-mil relationship on its current, solid plateau or we can use your visit to advance us to a higher-level. We see two general directions you can steer this relationship. The first is to build on our recent successes. The CARAT exercise is our primary engagement opportunity. This year is the first in recent memory where the Bruneians gave us a set of engagement objectives to make the exercise more relevant to the RBN and the RBAF's needs more generally. You could encourage your military interlocutors to take charge of their engagement with us so they gain the maximum benefit for their troops. Brunei has been more open than other CARAT partners to having foreign observers at these exercises. You could welcome this as a way to leverage our Brunei activities into stronger regional exercises.

19. (C) Admiral Fallon first floated the idea of an intel

relationship and we are close to seeing the first exchange of reports. Bruneians fear that they will be overwhelmed from drinking from our fire hose and not have much to share in return. You could acknowledge their concerns but encourage them to get started as we won't know the potential value of this exchange until we get it rolling.

¶10. (C) We recently completed the first phase of a Defense Resource Management Study (DRMS). Pehin Yasmin has been the driver of this effort to get MinDef and the services to more closely link procurement decisions to a strategic vision of force capabilities needs. To many in the RBAF, managing money and acquisitions is distasteful work not fit for true warriors and better left for foreign technicians and female accountants. If you have an illustrative personal anecdote to share, you could usefully remind your interlocutors that running the shop is an important part of the military profession. Getting the right people with the right equipment and the right training to the right battlefield (or peacekeeping field) is key to the RBAF earning the respect of its peers.

¶11. (C) We have agreed in principle and are close to finalizing an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Brunei learned how useful this agreement could be when it deployed its Blackhawks to Aceh in support of tsunami relief and had no spare parts available. Our side updating the template has set us back a month or so, but lawyers on both sides recently met via VTC and the ACSA should be on track. (Note: We also hope to finalize an FMS case on Blackhawk parts in the coming weeks.) You could reiterate our readiness to finalize this agreement and perhaps, have you and Pehin Halbi sign on the margins of the next ChOD event.

¶12. (C) The second direction we can take this relationship is by considering not what we have to offer Brunei in training and other engagement, but what Brunei can offer us. In the past year, Brunei has hosted within its territory (at the UK Jungle Warfare School) a special forces training exercise and two equipment field trials run by the National Assessment Group (NAG). We also sent two U.S. Marine instructors

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through the UK Jungle Warfare School about 18 months ago. If we are creative, we may be able to grow our mil-mil relationship in directions that would give our service men and women, sailors, and marines access to training opportunities in Brunei's unique, virgin jungle preserves and offshore oil platforms. In short, we can make this mil-mil relationship richer by seeing it as a two-way street, and not just as a resource-sucking training vacuum.

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Suggested Talking Points  
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¶13. (C) Few U.S. visitors meet with the Sultan, so this will be an outstanding opportunity to give him an overview of the range of American security imperatives in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, His Majesty would likely appreciate discussion of the following issues:

- PACOM's regional realignment of forces and PACOM views on regional security in East Asia, including relations with China and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.
- Security in Southeast Asia. His Majesty may be interested in your views on hotspots in the AOR. The Philippines and Indonesia may be of special interest since Brunei has forces in both places.
- Peacekeeping. We should welcome Bruneian peacekeeping efforts in Mindanao and Aceh and encourage future deployments as soon as units are trained and ready. The recent deployment to Bangladesh to participate in the peacekeeping exercise

Shanti-Doot is a significant milestone for Brunei.

- Military cooperation with the United States. In previous meetings, the Sultan has expressed his appreciation for U.S.-Bruneian military interaction and specifically raised CARAT and the Bruneian cadet at West Point (Class of 2009). As a result of our engagement, we now have five Ministry of Defense "Supreme Commander" scholars studying at U.S. universities (U of Michigan, U of Illinois Champaign-Urbana x2, U of Pennsylvania, and Embry Riddle) and probably three more plus an Air Force Academy Candidate applying this year.

¶14. (C) In meetings with CHOD Pehin Halbi and other senior officials, we would suggest that you raise the following points:

- Bruneian plans for further regional engagement as peacekeeping units become ready to deploy.

- PACOM activities in the region. In particular, the military role in regional disaster relief and humanitarian operations are likely to be of interest.

- Ship visits. Thank Brunei for hosting 5 USN ship visits last year. Our sailors see Brunei as a safe and unique port of call and welcome the hospitality shown. Brunei will host the USS Patriot and USS Momsen the week after your visit. We are planning some environmental clean-up COMREL activities to coincide with Earth Day.

- Counter-terrorism. The Bruneians are concerned about regional terrorist threats and would welcome PACOM's assessment of terrorist activities in the region. Their views would also be of interest.

- Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Brunei is a top down driven country. If you and General Halbi agree to a signing date, we'll have an important lever to push our two bureaucracies to finalize the ACSA text.

- On-going exercises and interaction between the Bruneian military and PACOM. CARAT continues to be a high priority. We would also like to continue training for U.S. forces at the unique jungle warfare school operated by the British. When Brunei takes possession of its new patrol vessels we will want to encourage enhancing CARAT to take advantage of the capabilities these new vessels will offer.

- Brunei's long-term procurement plans. The Bruneians

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are currently considering several defense systems including C4I and Joint Operations Center, UAVs, and other maritime domain awareness capabilities. We would like to know more about their plans, particularly with an eye towards promoting interoperability. Several U.S. firms are interested in military sales opportunities here.

- FMS training cases. Welcome steps taken to improve procedures to ensure Brunei has the funds in place on its FMS training cases in to take better advantage of future training opportunities. In the past, funding shortfalls and tardiness in appointing candidates have hampered Bruneian participation in Professional Military Education (PME) courses.  
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